

**BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**  
**OF THE STATE OF IDAHO**

IN THE MATTER OF APPLICATIONS AND )  
PERMITS FOR THE DIVERSION AND USE )  
OF SURFACE WATER AND GROUND )  
WATER IN AND TRIBUTARY TO THE )  
SELWAY-BITTERROOT WILDERNESS )  
AREA, GOSPEL-HUMP WILDERNESS AREA, )  
AND FRANK CHURCH-RIVER OF NO )  
RETURN WILDERNESS AREA )  
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**MORATORIUM ORDER**

The Director of the Department of Water Resources (“Director”), having responsibility for the administration of the appropriation of water in the State of Idaho, the protection of rights to the use of water within the state, the protection of the public interest in the waters of the state, and the conservation of the water resources of the state, enters the following Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Final Order.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. On April 30, 1993, the Director issued an Amended Moratorium Order that stopped the approval of certain applications seeking to appropriate surface water within the Salmon and Clearwater River Basins in Idaho.
2. On December 13, 1993, the United States filed Notices of Claim in the Snake River Basin Adjudication (“SRBA”) for federal reserved water rights for the Selway-Bitterroot, Gospel-Hump, and Frank Church-River Of No Return wilderness area designations. On February 27, 1997, a motion to amend the Notices of Claim for all three wilderness area designations was filed with the District Court of the Fifth Judicial District of the State of Idaho (the “SRBA district court”) to change the claimed priority dates.
3. As amended, pertinent portions of the claim filed in the SRBA for a federal reserved water right for the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness are as follows:

Identification Number: A31-11191  
Name of Claimant: United States of America

Date of Priority: September 3, 1964, except for Magruder Corridor that has priority date of July 23, 1980

Source of Water Supply: All streams, lakes, ponds, springs, seeps or other natural sources of water including groundwater, whether named or not and whether perennial, intermittent or ephemeral within the boundaries of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. This claim is intended to also include those sources of water which are not presently known or not reasonably susceptible of quantification because of the de minimus and diffuse nature of their flow and which supply wetlands, marshes, or other vegetation which serves such wilderness purposes as habitat protection and drinking water for wildlife. Tributary to Lochsa and Selway Rivers.

Location of Points of Diversion: None

Location of Place of Use: All locations in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness where natural sources of water exist.

Instream Flow Beginning

And Ending Points: All locations in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness where natural sources of water exist

Total Quantity Claimed: The entire unappropriated flow and all other natural sources of water as of the date of designation, specifically, September 3, 1964.

4. As amended, pertinent portions of the claims filed in the SRBA for federal reserved water rights for the Gospel-Hump Wilderness are as follows:

Identification Numbers: 77-12774, 82-11120

Name of Claimant: United States of America

Date of Priority: February 24, 1978

Source of Water Supply: All streams, lakes, ponds, springs, seeps or other natural sources of water including groundwater, whether named or not and whether perennial, intermittent or ephemeral within the boundaries of the Gospel-Hump Wilderness. This claim is intended to also include those

sources of water which are not presently known or not reasonably susceptible of quantification because of the de minimus and diffuse nature of their flow and which supply wetlands, marshes, or other vegetation which serves such wilderness purposes as habitat protection and drinking water for wildlife. Tributary to Salmon River.

Location of Points of Diversion: None

Location of Place of Use: All locations in the Gospel Hump Wilderness where natural sources of water exist.

Instream Flow Beginning

And Ending Points: All locations in the Gospel-Hump Wilderness where natural sources of water exist

Total Quantity Claimed: The entire unappropriated flow and all other natural sources of water as of the date of designation, specifically, February 24, 1978.

5. As amended, pertinent portions of the claims filed in the SRBA for federal reserved water rights for the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness are as follows:

Identification Numbers: A75-13605, A77-12775

Name of Claimant: United States of America

Date of Priority: July 23, 1980

Source of Water Supply: All streams, lakes, ponds, springs, seeps or other natural sources of water including groundwater, whether named or not and whether perennial, intermittent or ephemeral within the boundaries of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. This claim is intended to also include those sources of water which are not presently known or not reasonably susceptible of quantification because of the de minimus and diffuse nature of their flow and which supply wetlands, marshes, or other vegetation which serves such wilderness purposes as habitat protection and drinking water for wildlife. Tributary to Salmon River.

Location of Points of Diversion: None

Location of Place of Use: All locations in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness where natural sources of water exist.

Instream Flow Beginning

And Ending Points: All locations in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness where natural sources of water exist

Total Quantity Claimed: The entire unappropriated flow and all other natural sources of water as of the date of designation, specifically, July 23, 1980.

6. On December 18, 1997, the SRBA district court issued *Order Granting and Denying United States' Motions for Summary Judgment on Reserved Water Rights* for claims made by the United States under the Wilderness Act, Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act ("MUSYA"), and Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Act ("HCNRA"), referred to herein as "1997 SRBA Reserved Rights Order." In this order, the SRBA district court ruled that: "The United States is entitled to a federal reserved water right for all unappropriated flows in the Frank Church-River of No Return, the Selway-Bitterroot, and the Gospel-Hump wilderness areas." (1997 SRBA Reserved Rights Order, p. 5). The SRBA district court emphasized its ruling by stating: "The amount of water minimally sufficient to fulfill Congressional intent is the total amount of unappropriated water within each [wilderness] area, **such that none is ever available for future appropriation.**" (1997 SRBA Reserved Rights Order, p. 15, emphasis added).

7. On July 24, 1998, the SRBA district court issued *Memorandum Decision Granting, In Part, and Denying, In Part, the United States' Motion for Summary Judgment on Reserved Water Rights Claims* for claims made by the United States under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, referred to herein as "1998 SRBA Wild and Scenic Decision." In this decision, the SRBA district court ruled that under the Central Idaho Wilderness Act, the United States " ... **reserved land north and south of the Mainstem of the Salmon River as wilderness, thereby reserving all unappropriated flows of water in the Mainstem**" referring back to the 1997 SRBA Reserved Rights Order in a footnote. (1998 SRBA Wild and Scenic Decision, p. 7, emphasis added). The SRBA district court noted that "Congress declared that the Mainstem of the Salmon River [that segment of the main Salmon River designated as a component of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System] would be administered solely under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, not the Wilderness Act." However, the SRBA district court did not describe any limitation on the reservation of unappropriated flows, nor did the court distinguish between that segment of the main Salmon River designated as Wild and Scenic and that segment adjacent to the Gospel-Hump and Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Areas that lies downstream of the Wild and Scenic designation.

8. On October 1, 1999, the Supreme Court of the State of Idaho issued 1999 Opinion No. 113 in the case of *Potlatch Corp. et al. v. United States of America* affirming the 1997 SRBA Reserved Rights Order granting the United States reserved water rights for all unappropriated water in the Frank Church-River of No Return, the Selway-Bitterroot, and the Gospel-Hump Wilderness Areas.

9. As of the date of this Order, there are approximately 60 pending applications for permits to appropriate surface water and ground water in the Selway-Bitterroot, Gospel-Hump, and Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Areas, and areas tributary to the wilderness areas. In addition, approximately 90 permits to appropriate water have been issued in these areas for which proof of beneficial use has not yet been submitted.

10. Although the SRBA district court has not issued final decrees for federal reserved water rights in the Selway-Bitterroot, the Gospel-Hump, and the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Areas, the Supreme Court's decision of October 1, 1999, once final, will preclude future appropriations of water within the wilderness areas and in areas tributary to the wilderness areas.

## CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Director is responsible for the allocation of water for new uses in Idaho. Section 42-203A(5), Idaho Code, reads in pertinent part as follows:

... In all applications whether protested or not protested, where the proposed use is such **(a) that it will reduce the quantity of water under existing water rights, or (b) that the water supply itself is insufficient for the purpose for which it is sought to be appropriated,** or (c) where it appears to the satisfaction of the director that such application is not made in good faith, is made for delay or speculative purposes, or (d) that the applicant has not sufficient financial resources with which to complete the work involved therein, or (e) that it will conflict with the local public interest, where the local public interest is defined as the affairs of the people in the area directly affected by the proposed use, or (f) that it is contrary to conservation of water resources within the state of Idaho; the director of the department of water resources may reject such application and refuse issuance of a permit therefor, or may partially approve and grant a permit for a smaller quantity of water than applied for, or may grant a permit upon conditions. (emphasis added)

2. The Director is authorized under the provisions of Section 42-1805(7), Idaho Code, as follows:

After notice, to suspend the issuance or further action on permits or applications as necessary to protect existing vested water rights or to ensure compliance with the provisions of chapter 2, title 42, Idaho Code, or to prevent violation of the minimum flow provisions of the state water plan.

3. The claims filed by the United States in the SRBA for federal reserved water rights for all unappropriated water in the Selway-Bitterroot, Gospel-Hump, and Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Areas did not limit the claimed amount to unappropriated water arising solely within the wilderness areas as of the date the wilderness areas were reserved, nor did the claims include subordination to existing permits to appropriate water having junior priority dates for private holdings within the wilderness areas. Neither the 1997 SRBA Reserved Rights Order nor the Idaho Supreme Court decision affirming the 1997 SRBA Reserved Rights Order limited the federal reserved water rights to unappropriated water arising solely within the boundaries of the wilderness areas. Therefore, both the SRBA district court and the Idaho Supreme Court have included unappropriated water flowing into the wilderness areas, either above or below land surface, as part of the unappropriated water “in” or “within” the wilderness areas.

4. Neither the 1997 SRBA Reserved Rights Order, the 1998 SRBA Wild and Scenic Decision, nor the Idaho Supreme Court decision affirming the 1997 SRBA Reserved Rights Order excluded portions of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, the South Fork of the Salmon River, or Big Creek lying upstream of the wilderness area boundaries, or clearly excluded the Mainstem of the Salmon River, from being considered as sources for unappropriated water “in” or “within” the wilderness areas as of the date the wilderness areas were reserved.

5. Although petitions for rehearing are pending before the Idaho Supreme Court, a moratorium on the granting of new permits to appropriate surface water or ground water and on continued development under existing permits is necessary. A moratorium will preserve the status quo until final decrees are issued for federal reserved water rights and limit the potential for resources being expended to develop water rights for which no unappropriated water may be available.

6. Because this moratorium order is issued to preserve the status quo, the order should take effect immediately upon issuance to protect the public interest in accordance with the provisions of Section 67-5247, Idaho Code.

## **ORDER**

IT IS, THEREFORE, HEREBY ORDERED that the prior Amended Moratorium Order of the Director issued on April 30, 1993, remains in effect and the requirements listed below also apply.


IT IS FURTHER HEREBY ORDERED that a moratorium is established on the processing of applications for permits to appropriate surface water or ground water within and tributary to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area, the Gospel-Hump Wilderness Area, and the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area, subject to the following conditions:

1. This moratorium order shall be in effect on and after its entry and shall remain in effect until withdrawn or modified by order of the Director, except as provided herein.
2. This moratorium order applies to all applications for permit, previously filed or to be filed, and all existing permits for which proof of beneficial use has not been filed with the Department, seeking to appropriate surface water or ground water within the Salmon River Basin upstream from the location where the Salmon River leaves the Gospel-Hump Wilderness Area in Section 3, T24N, R4E, B.M. and in the Clearwater River Basin upstream from the location where the Selway River leaves the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area in Section 7, T31N, R10E, B.M. The wilderness areas and tributary areas affected by this moratorium order are depicted on the attached map.
3. This moratorium order does not apply to any application proposing a non-consumptive use of water.
4. This moratorium order does not prevent the Director from reviewing an application that otherwise would not be approved under terms of this moratorium on a case by case basis, if the Director determines that the use of the water pursuant to the application would have no effect on other water rights due to:
  - (a) the location of use; or
  - (b) the effect on other water rights would be offset through mitigation provided by the applicant.

5. The holders of all existing permits to appropriate water within the Selway-Bitterroot, Gospel-Hump, and Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Areas, and within areas tributary to those wilderness areas, shall upon receipt of this moratorium order immediately stop further development under the permit, and within sixty (60) days of receipt of this order do one of the following:

- (a) file proof of beneficial use documenting the extent of diversion and beneficial use of water that was completed prior to receiving this moratorium order; or
- (b) request a stay in the development period under the permit, in accordance with Section 42-204, Idaho Code, until the conditions that resulted in this order have been alleviated, if such should ever occur.

Dated this 26<sup>th</sup> day of October, 1999.

  
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KARL J. DREHER  
Director



# Wilderness Moratorium Areas

October 26, 1999

